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AJ, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH PREVIEW OF DECEMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

REF: EUR/ERA EMAIL - 12/04/09

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathy Allegrone, Reasons 1.
4 (b), (d).

¶1. (SBU) On December 7, Mathieu Carmona, MFA Deputy Director for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, provided the following preview for the December 7-8 Foreign Affairs Council meeting of EU foreign ministers:

DINNER WITH LADY ASHTON

¶2. (SBU) Carmona mentioned that the December 7 dinner would give foreign ministers their first opportunity for a substantive meeting with Lady Ashton, the newly chosen EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and would largely be devoted to discussing how to move forward on a plan to create the EU External Action Service for presentation to heads of state by April. Carmona pointed out that, as per the agreed upon process for entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Swedes will continue to chair this final Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) under their presidency, with Ashton chairing the meetings starting in January.

SOMALIA

¶3. (SBU) Carmona said the FAC will launch an EU effort to train troops from the Somali Transitional Federal Government in cooperation with Uganda. For the French, this is an extension of their bilateral training efforts in Djibouti, which are drawing to a close, and Carmona said around 30 French trainers currently in Djibouti would be transferred to Uganda to form the French contribution to the EU training effort.

WESTERN BALKANS

¶4. (C) Now that it has been decided to transform the EU's Operation Althea in Bosnia to a training mission for Bosnian security forces, EU foreign ministers will discuss a time line for doing so. According to Carmona, France hopes to start detailed discussions on implementing the transfer in the spring, although he said the UK and Slovakia are pressing to hold off until after Bosnian parliamentary and presidential elections in autumn 2010. On the Butmir process, Carmona said France has noted little progress recently, though he added that France does not support the separation of posts of High Representative and the EU Special Representative in Bosnia, since this would separate political power from the resources of the EU. On Macedonia, Carmona said he believed that Greece would block the Council from

setting a date to begin the EU accession process during its December 10 meeting.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE

15. (C) Carmona said member states were still discussing the controversial statement proposed by the Swedish presidency on the Middle East peace process. He said France was arguing for a short text stressing the message that the EU supports restarting negotiations and offering EU support in the form of security guarantees in the West Bank if the two sides are able to reach agreement. Carmona said the Swedish text was very pessimistic, adding "if we wanted to list everything that was blocking the peace process, we would have a very long text, and the longer a text is, the more controversial it becomes." He added that the Swedish text contained language citing "East Jerusalem" as the capital of a Palestinian state, and said that this was not only unacceptable to France, but was contrary to the traditional diplomatic phrase citing "Jerusalem" as the future capital of Israel and an independent Palestinian state. Carmona said that, given the existing EU consensus on this latter formulation, he expects something similar to appear in the statement.

IRAN

16. (C) Carmona said that the FAC would approve draft language
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on Iran to be appended to the December 10 European Council statement. He said that negotiations on the text were ongoing, but that as of the morning of December 7, wording was emerging that France found encouraging. France, together with the United Kingdom and Germany, is pushing for a Council statement tasking EU foreign ministers to start preparing for the possibility of new sanctions, although Carmona stressed that the statement will not give a "rushed" timeline and will mention that the offer of negotiations is still open to Iran. Carmona repeated that, to maintain EU unity, a UN Security Council resolution would be ideal.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

17. (C) The first ministerial meeting between EU member states and the six Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) will be held on the margins of the FAC. Carmona said the objective of the meeting will be to express political support for establishing concrete projects in the context of the four "thematic platforms" established by the EU for the Eastern Partnership: democracy and good governance, economic integration, energy security, and contacts between peoples. The Commission, with Council oversight, will then do much of the work to formulate and execute specific projects. Carmona said one key question was whether Ashton would gain control over the Eastern Partnership, as the new EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Czech Stefan Fuele, also has formal responsibility for the "neighborhood policy," under which the Eastern Partnership has traditionally fallen. France wants Ashton to have maximum control over neighborhood policy. However, Carmona suspects Commission President Barroso will fight this so he can leverage Ashton's dual hat as Commission vice-president (and therefore theoretically under Barroso's authority) by positioning himself as arbiter in any policy dispute between Fuele and Ashton.

RIVKIN